

Senator McCorry, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Makenzi Hurtado, and I live in West Hartford.

I am Vice President of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers which has over 1200 members throughout the state. Our organization represents the teachers of the Connecticut Technical Schools.

I urge you to support HB 6763 because this bill will empower educators to “teach beyond the test” and create assessments that are appropriate for our students.

Most simply, any amount of time that is spent prepping for, teaching to, or taking standardized tests could be used doing something much more valuable. The goal of the technical school is to prepare students to meet the skilled workforce needs of Connecticut. Our students do not need to attend a post-secondary program and yet they are required to take the SATs. Our students are only in their academic classes 90 days out of the year. Any days taken out to focus on these tests are days when students are not doing what they are meant to be doing... learning.

We see, as many other districts, that this more negatively affects our schools that serve our most diverse student bodies. These tests were never designed for these children and therefore they tend to score lower on these tests. As a result, teachers that serve these students are forced to spend even more time focusing on SAT testing and taking time away from teaching and learning. They do this, not because they believe that the test is beneficial, but because there is a fear that if they do not meet certain scores, they will be considered a failing school and be taken over by the state. Our students go to school to learn, not to pass tests. These tests do not even provide feedback to schools or teachers in a time period that would allow them to improve the teaching and learning for the students in their classroom.

I would also like to add that along with being a life-long educator, I am also a parent. Because my son is now in fourth grade, I am now seeing the effects of these tests from the parent perspective. My son is a special education student. I have watched his teachers use formative and summative assessments to inform their teaching and support of my child. His teachers are highly educated professionals who I know are working in the best interest of my child. My son loves learning and he loves his school. However, this year I also have seen the affects of the required mastery testing on him. Not only is the time spent prepping and taking these tests a waste of his learning time, but it has also caused him undue stress and worry. I know that nothing is going to come from these tests that will inform his teachers on how to educate him better. There is nothing that he will learn from this time wasted.

We need an audit to review the investment that our schools put into these tests and whether there is actually a value to these assessments. Our children deserve better than this.